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JACQUES GRUET, CALVIN'S ETHICAL VICTIM.

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I.

Although the martyrdom of Gruet was the proto-protestant crime, it has never been related in the English language. Two or three biographers of Calvin have touched on it just far enough to illustrate the characteristic casuistry of their saint's defenders; they have tried to lay the guilt of Gruet's execution on the Council of Geneva, which tried to save him, or on the cruelty of the time and place, which really were merciful, and with various subterfuges to relieve the actual criminal. A more curious fact is that not even the opponents of Calvinism—not the Unitarians who have said so much about Calvin's later victim, Servetus—have paid attention to the case of Gruet. The significance of this silence seems to be that Gruet was slain solely for his ethical heresies, and it is tacitly conceded that whatever may be said of Calvin's theology, his moral code was of such perfection that any head venturing to question it might justly be cut off. But now an age of ethical inquiry has arrived; it is time to look up our early moral Protestants and ethical martyrs; and having lately got hold of a quarto printed at Geneva ten years ago, containing the documents connected with Gruet's case, edited by Henri Fazy, from the archives there, I am able to tell, for the first time in English, the tragical story of Gruet.

In the early sixteenth century there was in Geneva as refined and cultured a society as any in Europe. The lifting of the papal yoke made Geneva a republic and gave it a grand impulse morally and intellectually; there were all manner of discussions and speculations—nationalist, socialist, utopian—but no acrimony nor intolerance. There was an association called "The Patriots," much interested in social problems, and another called "Spirituals," whose views remarkably anticipated those of the Emersonians in New England. They were related to a large fraternity in Europe called "Brethren of the Free Spirit," who maintained that the spirit of man is the divine spirit, and were especially interested in ethical culture. They were generally scholarly people of high character who perceived that the revolution in the Church of Rome involved a liberation from monastic morality—a new moral world. Amid all these intellectual activities grew Jacques Gruet, a member of the ancient aristocracy of Geneva, a fine scholar, something of a poet, an idealist, but with a passion for dialectics. He was a brave, manly youth, universally beloved, and the only offence against morals ever brought against him was—dancing at a wedding!

The absolutism of Calvin as Minister of Geneva was first felt by the astounding raid made on the dancers at the fashionable wedding just alluded to. The lady in whose house the festivity occurred (1546) was the wife of a high officer; she was thrown into prison and several of her guests also, among these being Gruet. These imprisonments were brief (three days), but they were inflicted on persons of social distinction and of high character. That Calvin was the prime mover in the affair was not at first known, but it was soon discovered through a public denunciation of young Gruet, which he made from the pulpit. Gruet was seated quietly in the congregation, during the Sunday service, and was amazed at hearing his name uttered by the minister, and himself described as "*meschant et balafré*," wicked and—what? *Balafré* means "gashed" or "slashed," and it seems to have been a reference to a fashion shortly before introduced of cutting the trousers with a small opening at the knee. Calvin induced the municipal council to enact a decree against slashed trousers, "not," as he wrote to Farel, "that we cared about the thing itself, but because we saw through the chinks of those breeches a door would be opened to all sorts of profusion and luxury." Such were the petty oppressions with which John Calvin occupied himself for years at Geneva. A system of espionage into the smallest affairs of personal life was among his first "Institutes" of religion. People were forbidden to give their children any name that had ever been borne by a Catholic saint. A man was imprisoned for naming his son Claude after Calvin had ordered the child to be named Abraham. These things caused resentment among the citizens, and their comments brought on a reign of terror. An eminent gentleman named De la Mar, conversing with a small group, remarked that Calvin was "a man of great intellect and virtues, but governed by his passions, impatient, full of hatred, and if he once takes a spite

against a man never forgives." Another of the group, M. Ameaux, said he thought Calvin a bad man and his preaching false. Both remarks were overheard by the Minister's spy; both speakers were thrown into prison, and Ameaux was compelled to walk through the city in his shirt, carrying a lighted torch, and ask the Minister's pardon kneeling in the street.

Gruet did not get off so easily as that. After hearing himself denounced from the pulpit as "*meschant et balafré*" the young man, as he was leaving church, made an angry remark about such personalities as "unfit for the pulpit," a remark conveyed, of course, to the Minister, who had already fixed on the unconscious youth an evil eye. For this there were reasons stronger than the dancing incident. Gruet does not appear to have been a member of the associations in Geneva—"The Patriots" and the "Spirituals"—but he was regarded by them as the intellectual representative of their ideas and aims. He spoke at their meetings, and being, in addition to his brilliant genius, a man of independent means and of aristocratic birth, his influence was not favorable to the Protestant popedom which the Minister sought to establish. Calvin bitterly complained that so many absented themselves from church; he once tried to frighten them by a startling story of a man who, because he did not go to church, was carried off by the Devil and pitched into the river, and was furious because this tale was laughed at. The generally enlightened citizens preferred their progressive orators to sombre expositions of election and reprobation, and Jacques Gruet was their natural leader. It is evident that Calvin had long marked Gruet for destruction. Unfortunately the inquisitorial régime had left behind a number of statutes and methods, not yet repealed but supposed obsolete, which the Minister determined to refurbish. Still more unfortunately, the City Council was composed of weak men, quite unable to resist the man of blood and iron who had become their Minister, and who was able to show in his Bible a text for every oppression and cruelty his pious malice could devise. But Calvin pursued his purposes cautiously and deliberately. With regard to Gruet he awaited his opportunity, and it came.

The frantic rage into which Calvin's petty oppressions had thrown the Genevois found expression one day (June 27, 1547) in a written menace nailed on the door of St. Peter's Church:

"Big Paunch, you and your Companions had better keep silence; if you irritate us too much, none shall prevent our silencing you. You will curse the hour you left your monkery. You will speedily come to the end of your denunciations, f—— priests, renegades who come here to ruin everything. When people have endured enough, they take revenge. Take care that you do not meet a fate like that of M. Verli at Freiburg. We will not have so many masters. Mark well what I say!" [Verli had been slain in a street quarrel.]

"Big Paunch" could not have been addressed to meagre Calvin, but may have been meant for one of his spies. The coarse menace was not, as Calvin privately wrote to Viret, written by Gruet,—nothing could be more unlike him,—yet Gruet was at once arrested, and he alone. For there was now a long score to settle with Gruet, who, without having said anything against the Minister personally, had been freely affirming the principles of personal liberty and moral freedom. His views were precisely similar to those maintained by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Herbert Spencer, and Mill, in our own time; they had been adopted by the clubs, and especially by the "Spirituals," whom Calvin labelled "Libertines." Gruet and his circle maintained that neither Minister nor Magistrate had anything whatever to do with private conduct; their right of interference arose only where individual conduct injured the equal rights of another, or the actual interests (not the mere opinions) of the community. No theological heresy was charged against Gruet in the indictment on which he was tried. Calvin was far-seeing enough to recognise that there was growing up in Geneva, the most influential centre of the "Reformation," an ethical revolution which would entirely destroy the biblical and patriarchal theocracy which he and his French lieutenants meant to establish in place of the Papacy. The ethical movement related to the freedom declared by the Reformation was what Calvin resolved to arrest, and did arrest in the person of Jacques Gruet.

Gruet, though unmarried, had a fine mansion and library. The only questionable books found therein were two by Lucian. Among the manuscripts seized were several notes in neat Latin, drafts of letters, and entries in a commonplace book. In one letter he speaks of the "Bishop of Ascoli" (phrase for a great hypocrite), who "wishes to be adored as a Pope" and "to be in the place of the Grand Turk" (phrase for the king of France). Although Calvin was not named, everybody, including himself, assigned the cap to his head. In another letter he counsels a friend against melancholy, and says, "man has no worse enemy than man;" he also advises his friend "never to bend to the will of one man, however able." An entry was, "One should be a servant of God alone and live joyously." Another (in Latin): "All that are called laws, both human and divine, are for the happiness of men."

I have said that no charge of theological heresy was made against Gruet. Yet there was found the following entry in his commonplace book: "The

world is eternal. Moses could not have known positively all that he has related about the creation. There is neither paradise nor hell. All that is in man dies with the body. The Christian religion is a fable." When asked about this at his trial, Gruet said that it was his habit to write down what struck him, and some time afterwards recur to it, when he might find it true or false. Calvin privately wrote to a correspondent that this heretical passage was a quotation from a book in which he had seen it, but he did not say this publicly nor to the magistrates, whom he was willing to leave under an impression that Gruet was an "infidel." Yet Calvin was artistic in his deadly purpose; he did not desire at that moment a theologically heretical victim, but an ethical one; he meant to terrorise the moral and social reformers. Consequently the prosecutor did not emphasise the heretical entry, but left it to have its silent weight. Nevertheless it did not have much weight, and there was little else to be cited against Gruet. He admitted that he had spoken of Calvin as a "raillard," after his own denunciation in the pulpit; he admitted the views he had asserted about personal liberty; and there was only one point at which his courage broke down: he agreed that the law ought to suppress dancing! One may note in this item the horror in which the early Calvinists held this innocent and healthy amusement, and realise the tremendous forces which transmitted that strange hostility to some in our own time.

Gruet had already been punished for his dancing, and his surrender on that point left little else for the prosecution to bring against him. He utterly denied any complicity with the threatening placard which had caused his arrest. The prosecution admitted that there was no evidence connecting Gruet with it, and the case was about to be withdrawn. But Calvin would not allow his victim to escape. He sent to the Council a demand that, for the honor of God, the hand of Justice should fall on the many calumniators of both magistrates and preachers, and that the prosecution of one who had spoken against him (Calvin) should be pursued and further information elicited. This was really the death sentence on Gruet. "It is now," wrote Calvin to Viret, "the moment for us to fight seriously."

A BUDDHIST TRACT.

During the World's Fair the interest taken in other religions, especially in Buddhism, grew to such an extraordinary degree that some Christians began to fear for Christianity and tried to counteract the favorable impression which the foreign delegates had made on the Chicago public. The idea prevailed that missionary work was redundant because the followers of Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed, and Confucius were on a par with the followers of Jesus Christ, and no longer needed the Gospel. To counteract the evil influence of this opinion, a leaflet was published for distribution at the entrance of the Art Palace, in which the Religious Parliament was being held. The leaflet fell into my hands, and, being of extraordinary interest, I cannot help calling attention to it, and shall be glad to contribute my share to its wide circulation[1].

The leaflet contains the reprint of a Chinese placard, being a religious tract that exhorts men to conversion. The occasion on which the placard was produced is described in *The Far East*, as follows:

"Gan-kin was full of death. There was a great drought. No rain had fallen for six months. The city was parched and dry. Foul odors and pestilential gases, resulting from indescribably unsanitary conditions, bred fevers and cholera and death. There was no water to wash in, and hardly any to drink. The children died. The beasts died. The people died. The crops failed. Famine threatened the city. Who was to blame? Above all, who was to help?

"Kaolaishan, disciple of Buddha, had an inspiration. The Buddhist priest Che had spoken. Gan-kin had forgotten his words; this miserable state of things was quite to be expected; but the town should remember once more. If he were to remind Gan-kin it would be an act of merit. He would gain. The town would gain. He might avert the famine.

"And so it came to pass that the words of the Buddhist priest Che were once more in vogue at Gan-kin. Kaolaishan did his work thoroughly. He printed a large tract. It was three feet long and one and one-half feet wide. It was posted up on the walls and distributed by thousands. Everybody who could read, read it. Everybody who could pray, prayed it. It enjoined a constant repetition of Buddha's name. His name was repeated innumerable times, for could not his name avail to avert the famine?

"The central figure on the sheet was that of the Buddhist priest. The lines of his garments were ingeniously contrived in readable characters. Three rows of dots on his shaven head showed the marks of his ordination. For every bead on the rosary in his hand he was supposed to repeat Buddha's name or a prayer. A coffin and a skeleton at the foot of the sheet represented death—a subject on which the Buddhist priest had thought.

The leaflet reproduces in fac-simile on a reduced scale the Chinese placard, and offers a literal translation of its contents, neglecting, however, the poetic measure and the rhyme, and showing sometimes a lack of tact in the choice of words. But the translation is clear enough to render the sense and give a fair impression of the religious spirit of the original.

The motive of the publication is "to let Buddhism speak for itself." The author of the tract says:

"Buddhism is the faith of millions to-day. Are we to believe that this faith, evolved by the ages in the process of religious development, exactly suits the requirements of these millions, and that all efforts for their evangelisation are ill-judged and unreasonable attempts to foist a foreign faith upon people who do not need it any more than they need foreign clothes? Or are we to number them among "the ignorant and those that are out of the way,"

[1] The leaflets can be had at five cents each, ten for 25 cents, or $1.50 per hundred, from W. E. B., 332 Lake street, Oak Park, Illinois.

upon whom the Christ of God had compassion, whom He has died to redeem, and to whom we are responsible to carry the glad tidings of His great love and great salvation?"

* * *

Before entering into the contents of the Buddhist tract a few remarks concerning missions will not be out of place. Missions are highly recommendable. They are in themselves a good thing and ought to be continued with vigor and enthusiasm. That religion is dead which does not missionarise. No worse objection can be made to the free thinkers of to-day, who frequently boast of representing the world-conception of the cultured and the intelligent, than their utter want of the missionarising spirit. Free thought can become worthy of consideration only when it begins to missionarise. So long as freethinkers do not bring sacrifices for a wide propagation of their views their faith is plainly of a negative kind. A positive faith always engenders an enthusiasm to spread it. Missionarising, far from being "ill-judged and unreasonable" is a sure symptom of the life that is in a religion. But while missions ought to be encouraged, we ought to spread at the same time the right spirit of missionarising.

The missionary who wants to spread his faith must not revile the people whom he wants to convert. He must not distort nor misrepresent their religious views, and not unnecessarily desecrate what is sacred to them. There are Christians among whom the opinion prevails that the good qualities of pagan religions are an obstacle to Christianity. Whenever such views obtain it is a sure sign that the right missionary spirit is missing. Let a missionary always look for the good sides of other religions, and let him carefully search for all the points of contact. Only by utilising the good in paganism, only by gaining the sympathy of the pagans can Christianity hope to conquer.

When St. Paul came to Athens he did not revile the Greek gods. On the contrary, he looked for some point of contact, and found it at last in an inscription written upon the altar dedicated to the Unknown God. Praising the scrupulous and conscientious religiosity of the Athenians, he proceeded to preach to them the Unknown God whom they had unwittingly worshipped.

There is a papal brief still extant written by Gregory the Great in the year 601, and addressed to the missionary monk Augustine, in which the policy of a very ingenious method of missionarising is outlined. The Pope was apparently a practical psychologist who knew how to treat men and make innovations acceptable. Whatever criticism may be made on the Pope's advice as being a kind of compromise with paganism, it certainly shows great keenness and good judgment. The success of his missionaries in England was a good evidence of the cleverness of his methods. Churches were built right on the shrines and sanctuaries of the old gods, and the festivals were continued under Christian names. Pope Gregory says:

"Because they (the Anglo-Saxons) are wont to slaughter at the feasts of the devils (i. e., of the pagan gods) many oxen and horses, it is decidedly necessary to let these feasts be continued and have another *raison d'être* given them. On kirmess and on the commemoration days of the holy martyrs, whose relics are preserved in those churches which are built on the spots of pagan fanes, a similar feast shall be celebrated; the festive place shall be decorated with green boughs and a church sociable shall be held. Only the slaughter of animals shall no longer be held in honer of Satan, but in praise of God, and the animals shall be slaughtered for the sake of eating them, and thanks shall be given for the gift to the giver of all goods."[1]

Gregory advises not to destroy the pagan temples, but to transform them into churches. He urges the adoption, as much as possible, of pagan rites, and the substitution of the names of saints for the names of heroes and gods. In the same spirit Bishop Daniel writes to Winfrid, commonly called Boniface, to be (Epist. xiv., 99) tolerant, patient, and to avoid all objuration lest the pagans be embittered. A missionary should not at once repudiate the genealogies of the gods, but should rather use them to prove their human character. He should propose questions which would set the pagans to thinking about the origin of the world and the origin of the gods, whence the gods came and what be the origin of the first god, whether they continue to generate new gods, and if not, when they had discontinued increasing, and, if they continued increasing, whether their number would by and by be infinite.

Leo the Great utilised the pagan art of Rome for Christian art. He changed the statue of Jupiter into St. Peter, and the goddess Anna Perenna became St. Anna Petronela, who is still worshipped in the Campagna. And the Christian missionaries instituted the Pope's method. The Teutonic eschatology of Muspilli, which is the destruction of the world by fire, was Christianised by German converts in a poem where Elijah and other saints and archangels take the place of the Teutonic gods, whose original features are unmistakably preserved.

This method of missionarising had its serious drawbacks, and led for a time to a great confusion of Christian and pagan beliefs. Thus the Danish king, Suen Tuesking, when starting on an expedition to England, made a treble vow to the god Bragafull, to Christ, and to St. Michael. And we read of Ketil, an Irish warrior, who in all ordinary cases called upon Christ, but whenever there was a matter of grave importance he addressed himself to Thor.[2] It is true that many

[1] See Beda Venerabilis, Hist. Eccles. Britorum, I., Chap. 30.

[2] Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, Vol. II., pp. 10-13.

pagan institutions and customs survived, but after all in the long run the evil influences were overcome, and the good only remained. A pagan festival, the Yuletide, has now become the most celebrated Christian feast, bearing the name Christmas, and Christianity was not the loser by it.

I do not mean to say that Christian missionaries should temporise with heathen error or compromise with heathen institutions; not at all; I only mean to say that Christian missionaries should not imitate St. Augustine's maxim, who regarded all virtues of the pagans as shining vices, but that they should joyously recognise and hail everything good in pagan religions. I simply stand up for rigid justice, and would demand of every missionary a sympathetic comprehension of that religion which the people to whom he is sent have embraced.

Are there not many institutions, moral convictions, habits and modes of thought in pagan countries which are unnecessarily antagonised by our missionaries? Should not Christian missionaries, in order to be successful, first of all have regard for the religious views which they intend to overthrow? Should they not recognise the noble aspirations of pagan saints and prophets, such as Buddha and Confucius? It would be better for Christianity if the pagan nations themselves began to send missionaries to Christian countries. For there is nothing more spiritually healthful than a severe competition among those who cherish the confidence of having found the truth.

We regret to say that the spirit in which the missionary addresses unbelievers is, upon the whole, offensive. He comes to non-Christians like an enemy who wants to destroy that which they regard as the highest and best, and the result is that they only gain converts of the lowest type, who become converted solely for the sake of worldly advantages and are a disgrace to the religion to which they become affiliated.

The proper spirit for a missionary would be to go to unbelievers, to reside among them in their own style of living and give them a practical example of his views of life. He should go to other countries and inquire into the significance of the people's religious convictions. He should say to them, "The people of our country are interested in your welfare and in your conceptions of truth. Please let me know what you believe, and when you have told me what you believe I will, if you are willing to listen to me, tell you what we believe. We believe that we are right and you believe that you are right. Let us compare our views, and whatever I can learn from you I wish to learn, and, *vice versa*, I expect that whatever you can learn from me you will consider, and, whatever the truth may be, we shall both be glad to accept it." If missionaries come in this spirit to other countries Christianity will no longer be identified with beef eating in China and with liquor drinking in India. There would be no prosecution. Missionaries could without fear of danger enter into the remotest corners of China. They would not be hated, but would be welcomed, and we hope that a time will come when all religions will exchange missionaries in the same way that the government of our nation sends ambassadors to other nations and in turn receives their representatives.

* * *

But let us return to the subject from which we started. The little Buddhist tract, translated for the purpose of ridiculing Buddhism, is apparently a gem of religious poetry, and many passages of it might grace any Christian hymn-book if they were only cast into an elegant literary form.

The title of the whole reads: "Tract Exhorting All Men to Invoke Buddha's Name." It consists of several parts. The first of it is a religious hymn on the vanity of all things, composed by the Buddhist priest Che, and reads, according to the translation before me as follows:

"It is good to reform; it is good to reform,
The things of the world will be all swept away.
Let others be busy while buried in care,
My mind, all unvexed, shall be pure.

"They covet all day long, and when are they satisfied?
They only regret that the wealth of the family is small,
They are clearly but puppets held up by a string,
When the string breaks they come down with a run.

"In the domain of death there is neither great nor small,
They use not gold nor silver and need not precious things,
There is no distinction made between mean and ignoble, ruler and prince.

"Every year many are buried beneath the fragrant grass;
Look at the red sun setting behind the western hills.
Before you are aware the cock crows and it is daylight again.

"Speedily reform. Do not say: 'It is early,'
The smallest child easily becomes old.
Your talent reaches to the dipper (in the heavens).
Your wealth fills a thousand chests.
[But consider that] the consequences of your actions will follow you in future time[1].

"It is good to exhort people to reform.
To become vegetarian[2], and invoke Buddha's name is a precious thing you can carry with you.
It may be seen that wealth and reputation are vain.
You cannot do better than to invoke Buddha's name."

[1] This line deviates from the copy before me. The translator has somehow misunderstood the original Chinese, and translates "your patrimony follows you, when will you be satisfied?" The rendering as given above is on the authority of Mr. K. Tanaka, a Japanese student of philosophy at the University of Chicago.

[2] The Chinese, speaking generally, are, as a nation, vegetarians. Frequently this is a matter of necessity with them, but when strict Buddhists they abstain from animal food from religious motives.

"There is, there is; there is not, there is not; yet we are troubled.
We labor, we toil; when do we rest?
Man born is like a winding stream;
The affairs of the world are heaped up mountain high.
From of old, from of old, and now, and now, many return to their original.
The poor, the poor, the rich, the rich, change places.
We pass the time as a matter of course;
The bitter, the bitter, the sweet, the sweet, their destiny is the same."

* * *

"To covet profit and seek reputation the world over
Is not so good as (to wear) a ragged priest's garment, and be found among the Buddhists.
A caged fowl has food, but the gravy pot is near.
The wild crane has no grain, but heaven and earth are his.

"It is difficult to retain wealth and fame for a hundred years,
Transmigration of souls continually causes change.
I exhort you, gentlemen, to speedily seek some way of reforming your conduct.
A man (being) once lost, a million ages (of suffering) will be hard to bear."

* * *

"A solitary lamp illumines the darkness of the night,
You get into bed, take off your socks and shoes;
Your three spirits and seven guardian angels turn and follow your dreams,
Whether they will come back in the morning light is uncertain."

* * *

"To be forgotten, grow old, and die of disease is a bitter thing,
But who has not this?
If you do not invoke Amitâbha Buddha, how can you escape punishment."

* * *

"Villainous devices, treacherous evil, hidden poison, false rejoicing,
Forgetting favors, crossing the river and then breaking the bridge (i. e., to serve oneself at the expense of others),
Losing all conscience, deceiving one's own heart; one that has done these things will live with the king of Hell.
He that has said good-bye to conscience, finds it even now difficult
To escape the punishment of the knife-hill and oil pot.
Houses, gold and silver, land, wife, family,
Grace and love, rank and lust, all are VAIN[1]."

[Now the Buddhist priest addresses the skeleton:—]

"How can you, sir, carry all things away with you?
A few layers of yellow earth cover all your glory."

[The inscription on the coffin reads as follows:—]

"A silver coffin worth 108,000 ounces of pure silver (about £27,000).
This man took pains to devise ingenious things, but all in VAIN.
To travel east, west, north, south, to see all life is vain;
Heaven is vain, earth is vain, including also mysterious man.
The sun is vain, the moon is vain.
They come and go, for what purpose?
Fields are vain, lands are vain, how quickly they change owners!
Gold is vain, silver is vain, after death how much remains in your hand?
Wives are vain, children are vain.
They do not join you on the way to hades.
According to the '*Tatsang* classic' vanity is lust,
According to '*Panrohsin* classic' lust is vanity.
He that travels from east to west is like a bonny bee;
After he has made honey from flowers with all his labor, all is vain.

"After midnight you hear the drum beat the third watch,
You turn over, and before you know where you are you hear the bell striking the fifth watch [indicating daylight].
To carefully think it over from the start, it is like a dream.
If you do not believe, look at the peach and apricot trees,
How long after the flowers open are they withered?
If you regard prince and minister, after death they revert to the soil,
Their bodies go to the earth, their breath to the winds,
Within the covering of yellow earth there is nothing but a mass of corruption; they pass away no better than pigs or dogs.
Why did they not at the beginning inquire of the Buddhist priest Che?
There is one life and not two deaths;
Don't brag, then, before others of your cleverness.
A man during life owns vast tracts of land,
After death he can only have three paces of earth [eight feet of land by twelve in length][1],

Here we must interrupt our quotation because the next following lines are apparently misunderstood by the translator. As they stand they give no sense. The translation reads as follows:

"To think it over carefully after death, nothing would be taken away;
The Buddhist priest Che has, with his own hand, written to you."

"The word heart:—loudly laugh!"

"Not much time need be employed in writing it.
It has one curve like the moon and three dots all awry.
The feathered tribe, and the beasts also, will become Buddhas.
If you only invoke Buddha's name you will go to the kingdom where there is the highest bliss."

The translator adds the following comment in explanation:

[At this point it will be seen that the winding convolutions of the priests robe have reached the centre of his body. Here the heart is by the Chinese supposed to be located, and a good deal of the "ingenuity" referred to in the title is contained in the fact that at this point the characters refer to the heart. Hence the exhortation to "laugh loudly." To Western minds the sudden introduction of three wholly disconnected lines breaking in upon the theme of the discourse is not sufficiently ingenious to dispense with explanation.]

The original Chinese, which in this passage is plainly legible, means (according to Mr. Tanaka's version):

The Buddhist priest Che wrote with his hand the word "heart," and he laughed to himself [thinking] how little time is needed in writing it, etc.

[1] The characters representing these several possessions are ranged above one large, elongated sign. This character, which is pronounced *Kong*, and corresponds pretty accurately to the Latin *vanus*, is thus shown to be the sum of man's earthly possessions and attainments; reminding one strongly of the words of the preacher—"All is vanity."

[1] This line the translator (as Mr. Tanaka informs me) omitted, but quoted it in a foot note as the liberal translation of "three paces of earth."

That is to say: The Buddhist priest Che writes the character *sin*,[1] which in Chinese is one of the easiest words to write, and he thinks to himself, "If only the people knew how easy it is to attain salvation! It is as easy as the writing of the word heart. Thus the whole world can be transfigured into the state of Nirvâna if only the name of Buddha be rightly invoked."

The passage reminds one of an old German hymn, which begins:

"*Es ist gar leicht ein Christ zu sein!*"
"'Tis easy indeed to become a Christian."

We need not discuss the significance of this statement, so similar in Buddhism and in Christianity; the truth is that the easiest thing is sometimes the most difficult to accomplish. A change of heart seems a trifling circumstance, but it implies a change of the entire man and of his whole life. The invocations of the saviour—be his title Buddha or Christ—implies the adoption of his views of life and moral maxims.

The tract now introduces a worldly-minded man, whose egotism is characterised in these words:

[An unbeliever says:—]
"I see other men die,
My heart is burning like fire.
I am not anxious about other men,
But [I tremble] because the wheel comes to me too."
The priest replies:—]
"If you wish to escape the ills of life and death,
At once invoke Buddha's name.
If in life you invoke his name
Hereafter you shall reap the highest bliss."
Pikiu, Pikiuni, Yiuposeh, Yiupoi.
"Virtuous men, virtuous women, and the other devotees of Buddha
Shall all together go to the Western Paradise.
On seeing this tract reflect, reflect.
Kaolaishan, disciple of Buddha, native of Chihli, has engraved it and given away as an act of merit. The block he retains in his own keeping.
Respect printed paper."

Such is the Chinese tract according to the Christian missionary's translation, with a few emendations of my own. Aside from the suggested change of the sense in the main passage, I have only taken the liberties which are of a purely literary character, replacing such phrases as "repeat Buddha's name" to "invoke Buddha's name," "article of death" by "domain of death," and the abbreviation "Mito" by the full name "Amitâbha Buddha," which latter form is better known.

The translator may, in spite of the mistakes which he made in several passages, be a good Chinese scholar, but he betrays his utter ignorance of Buddhism by his explanation of the words *Pikui, Pikuini, Yiuposeh, Yiupoi.* These words are the Chinese forms of the Sanskrit words *Bhikshu, Bhikshuni*;[1] *Upâsaka, Upâsikâ*, which means "monks, nuns; male lay disciples and female lay disciples." The translation of the Sanskrit words is given in the next following line, but the Christian missionary, in translating the placard, explains the words in a foot-note as:

"A Buddhist charm, probably derived from Indian names. The words have no significance whatever, being merely repeated as a kind of magic."

The words *Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upâsaka, Upâsikâ*, may be unknown to those Chinese people who received no religious education, but among Buddhists they are common terms; and what shall we think of a missionary who lives in China for the purpose of converting Buddhists, but is so unacquainted with Buddhism that he regards the words with which the congregation is commonly addressed as a kind of magic? Imagine that a Buddhist came to America and would not know what the words *pastor, deacon*, and *church member* or *communicant* meant, and would explain them to be unmeaning words used as a charm?

* * *

The whole placard is encompassed with two rows of little circles, which surround the hymns that appear in the shape of a priest's picture like a frame; and at the right-hand side we read the injunction to fill out the little circles with a red pencil on each three hundred times that the Refuge formula has been repeated.

The Christian translator of the tract condemns severely the pagan habit of repeating Buddha's name innumerable times, and we do not hesitate to join him in his disapproval. But he ought to consider first that the repetition of prayers or formulas is a practical method of impressing religious truths on the hearts of the people; it is in a certain stage of culture as commendable as the method of teaching the multiplication tables by making children commit them to memory; and, secondly, that the Christians, too, have to a great extent availed themselves of this method by enjoining people to repeat the Lord's Prayer over and over again. The practice of repeating the Refuge Formula and of repeating the Lord's Prayer are on the same level, and, if it is to be condemned in one case, why should we not denounce the other as well? The Buddhist Refuge Formula (in Chinese *O-mi-to-fu*, which means "I take my refuge in Buddha") is the vow which Buddhists make to pacify their emotions, and vows are the only prayers which Buddhism allows. This prayer a Buddhist is expected to have in his heart whatever he does,—when he lies down to sleep, when he rises in the morning, when he stands, when

1 *Sin* 心 means "heart."

1 In Pâli *Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni*. The Sanskrit *Bhikshuni* is not an original and legitimate Sanskrit word, but one of those later terms which has been formed after the analogy of the correspondent Pâli form.

he walks, when he is in good health, when he is sick, and when he faces death. The Christian translator says: "And there is none to answer, nor any even to hear." He continues:

"Listen to that cry going up from thousands of trembling lips, ay, from millions of suffering hearts, daily, hourly, momentarily; a monotonous, unceasing repetition.

"And remember that Jesus hears it always: that he died in response to its unspoken pain and sorrow. Remember that, having committed to us its deep, all-satisfying reply, He says to us to-day, "Go ye into all the world and preach THE GOSPEL to every creature."

Might not Buddhists reply in the same strain? They might say: "Did not Buddha, too, send out his disciples with the words which we quote literally as follows:

"'Go ye now, O bhikshus, for the benefit of the many, for the welfare of mankind, out of compassion for the world. Preach the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle, and glorious in the end, in the spirit as well as in the letter. There are beings whose eyes are scarcely covered with dust, but if the doctrine is not preached to them they cannot attain salvation. Proclaim to them a life of holiness. They will understand the doctrine and accept it."

Such an educated Christian as Lavater believed that the exorcisms of Gassner were efficacious on account of the holiness of the name of Jesus. He thought that the word "Jesus" could be used like a spell, or like the charm of the Indian medicine man. And this seems to be the view of the Christian translator of the Buddhist tract before us. Shall we say that the Buddhist contemplations of the vanity of earthly life and the seriousness of death are pagan notions so long as the request is made to invoke Buddha's name, and would these same thoughts rise to the dignity of Christian sentiment if only the name Buddha Amitâbha were replaced by Jesus Christ?

Apparently there is a Christianity which is not yet free from paganism and lacks charitableness in judging others. Buddhists might on the same ground regard Christian hymns as objectionable. Yet they will scarcely do so, for whatever advantages the Christian nations have over the followers of Buddha (and there can be no question about it that these advantages are great), in one respect Buddhism has the preference over Christianity. It is its breadth and comprehensiveness. Buddhists would not say of Mohammed, or Zoroaster, or Confucius that they are false prophets. Buddhists recognise the prophetic nature of all religious leaders. Sir Monier Monier Williams quotes the following Buddhistic commandment:

"Never think or say that your own religion is the best. Never denounce the religion of others."

And Ashoka's twelfth edict declares:

"There ought to be reverence for one's own faith and no reviling of that of others."

I have not as yet met a Buddhist who would not look upon Christ with reverence as the Buddha of Western nations. And, indeed, Buddhists can, without in the least straining the interpretation of Buddhist Scriptures, look upon Christ as the Maitreya, the Buddha to come, of whom Gautama Buddha had prophesied that he would rise five hundred years after him.

SONG OF THE PESSIMIST.

GEORGE RAINSFORD TALBOYS.

The weary world moves on—day follows day—
Men strive and struggle in the shifting sands
For something which, possessed, soon fades away,
And leaves them staring at their empty hands.

Great Buddha, ages past your giant mind
Pierced through the tinseled web of Mâyâ's veil
And looked into the dismal depths behind
With sad but searching gaze that did not quail.

You taught us then 'twas folly to employ
The fleeting hours of this earthly life
In following the phantom men call Joy,
Which leads us on in ways of pain and strife.

For when at length we seem to hold her fast,
And fain would rest from labor of long years,
She vanishes and leaves us all aghast
With palsied limbs and choked by senile tears.

Great Buddha, you alone have understood
The nature of that bright, misleading light
Which shines far off beyond the sombre wood,
Through which it flashes starlike on our sight.

But you, O Sage, no false hope could beguile.
You turned away from riches, wife, and friend,
Expecting nothing, without frown or smile,
But free from disappointment in the end.

THE OPEN COURT

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